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Contemporary maritime pressures and their implications for naval force structure planning

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**CONTEMPORARY MARITIME PRESSURES
AND THEIR
IMPLICATIONS FOR NAVAL FORCE STRUCTURE PLANNING**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

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CENTRE FOR MARITIME POLICY

2006

CERTIFICATION

I, Bruce Clark McLennan, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy to the Centre for Maritime Policy, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Bruce C. McLennan

8 November 2006

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CONTEMPORARY MARITIME PRESSURES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR NAVAL FORCE STRUCTURE PLANNING

ABSTRACT

The contemporary determinators of Australia's naval force structure are generally derived from threat based calculations as modelled through scenario focused exercises. Analysis, future capability development, and force structure planning, are principally configured for high-intensity war-fighting roles against a similarly sophisticated enemy, in the defence of the Australian mainland—in the belief that forces structured for the defence of Australia and its approaches can meet all the tasks asked of it by the Government. The underlying assumption is that geostrategic imperatives should shape strategy as well as force structure. The focus remains firmly affixed to 'contest' and the assertion of strategic security to the detriment of constabulary control. It also drives the tendencies for 'bigger/brighter and more gigabytes' that lead to the unsatisfiable demands in defence expenditure and the over-specification of required capability.

This thesis argues that a historical trend analysis offers a further dimension in appreciating naval force structure emphasis, claiming that there are at least three contemporary pressures that should be exerting influence on a nation's naval planning—these pressures are maritime geopolitical evolution through a dominant sea power hypothesis, the asymmetric response to technology that has changed the character of warfare, particularly at sea, and the inevitable progression of ocean exploitation and enclosure that has dawned the modern era in oceans governance. All three forces are applying their pressure in a similar direction—away from the traditional ship-of-war, towards the ship-of-law and the ship-of-expedition over the shore.

To argue this thesis there are three supporting suppositions:

The first supposition contends that we have entered the era of *Pax Americana*—an era of unchallenged maritime supremacy. Like the eras of *Pax Romana* and *Pax Britannica* before it, with *Pax Americana* ruling the oceans and guaranteeing the freedom of

navigation, there is now an emergent need to shift the balance of force structure away from those naval forces that are needed to fight for the control of the seas—combat and contest—and towards those naval forces that are going to use the sea control given to them—regulation and utilisation.

The second, that the character of warfare has changed: that conventional warfare has moved to the Third World. Yet the modern ship-of-war is at the forefront of technological development and the product of a nation's technical ability and resource. It is designed to fight against a similarly sophisticated enemy; against a platform that resembles itself in technical sophistication. It is also a weapon of statecraft, as only States can afford the infrastructure and costs to support them. If conventional warfare has indeed moved to the Third World, then it has also moved against States that do not have the technical skills and resource base to support the modern warship—the traditional ship-of-war no longer has an equally sophisticated enemy.

The third, that the modern practise of State sovereignty expansion and ocean enclosure that has dawned the modern era of ocean governance is a fundamental evolution in ocean usage. It is now being reflected in, or by, the increased awareness of, and emphasis on, 'constabulary tasking' such as resource management, environmental protection, immigration regulation, quarantine inspection and trans-national crime enforcement—the demand for a ship-of-law.